

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12
PA-01 SS-15 SP-02 TRSE-00 H-01 EB-08 BIB-01 CU-04
CA-01 HA-05 OMB-01 /082 W
-----042221 161326Z /41

O R 161311Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6040
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 04837

BELGRADE FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CSCE, FR
SUBJ: BELGRADE CSCE: DOMESTIC POLITICAL
CONSIDERATIONSBEHIND FRENCH CSCE TEXT

REF: BELGRADE 1259

1. SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM EXAMINES THE DOMESTIC
POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MOTIVATED THE
FRENCH TO TABLE THEIR DRAFT CONCLUDING DOCUMENT
FOR THE BELGRADE CSCE, EXPRESSES OUR CONCERN
THAT IN THE FAST-MOVING SITUATION IN BELGRADE,
WE COULD, AS THE ELECTIONS APPROACH, INADVERTENTLY
GIVE AMMUNITION TO GISCARD'S CRITICS, AND URGES
DEPARTMENT AND USDEL CSCE TO ACCENTUATE THE
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POSITIVE, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, ON THE FRENCH
INITIATIVE -- AT LEAST IN PUBLIC. IN SHORT,
WE HOPE THE FRENCH INITIATIVE CAN BE DEFLECTED
OR ABSORBED INTO THE OVERALL WESTERN EFFORT
WITHOUT PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT TO GISCARD. END
SUMMARY.

2. WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO JUDGE THE MERITS OR SHORTCOMINGS OF FRENCH DRAFT CONCLUDING DOCUMENT FOR BELGRADE CSCE (REFTEL), AND WE SYMPATHIZE WITH EC-9 AND NATO GROUPS WHICH HAVE BEEN BY-PASSED BY UNILATERAL FRENCH INITIATIVE AT A MOMENT WHEN NEED FOR WESTERN UNITY WAS OBVIOUSLY PARAMOUNT. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT GISCARD TOOK DECISION TO TAKE BELGRADE INITIATIVE LARGELY ON BASIS OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS, AND THAT WE HAVE AN INTEREST IN ENSURING THAT HIS ACTION IS VIEWED AS POSITIVELY AS POSSIBLE BY THE FRENCH ELECTORATE.

3. AS PART OF A BITTERLY FOUGHT ELECTION CAMPAIGN, GISCARD HAS BEEN UNDER FIRE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS FOR AN ALLEGED LACK OF FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES. HE HAS TRIED TO BLUNT THIS CRITICISM IN RECENT WEEKS THROUGH HIS INITIATIVES ON DISARMAMENT, ALGERIA, ETC. THE BELGRADE DOCUMENT IS A PART OF THIS EFFORT, INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT FRANCE IS STILL A LEADER ON DETENTE, THAT IT CAN AND DOES OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE NATO BLOC BUT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE WESTERN WORLD.
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4. GISCARD'S OPPOSITION HAS SEIZED ON FOREIGN CRITICISM OF HIS INITIATIVES TO PORTRAY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AS INEFFECTUAL, AND TO SHOW THAT ITS EFFORTS ARE NOT REALLY TAKEN SERIOUSLY ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. THE BELGRADE INITIATIVE, SINCE GISCARD HIMSELF FIRST ANNOUNCED IT, HAS A "PRESIDENTIAL" LABEL, AND THIS FACT, COUPLED WITH A NATURAL INCREASE IN PRESS ATTENTION TO THE WIND-UP OF THE BELGRADE MEETING, HAS FOCUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST HERE (E.G. A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL IN LE MONDE FEB. 16) IN THE FRENCH BELGRADE INITIATIVE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 04837

5. WHETHER OR NOT WE CONSIDER THE FRENCH
MOVE BENEFICIAL, AND REGARDLESS OF THE
ANNOYING LACK OF ADVANCE CONSULTATION,
WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO
ENSURE THAT THE FRENCH PUBLIC VIEWS THE BELGRADE
INITIATIVE AS A POSITIVE ONE. WE WOULD HOPE
THAT, AT A MINIMUM, WE COULD GIVE FRENCH
CREDIT PUBLICLY FOR MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO
FIND COMMON GROUND BETWEEN EAST AND WEST,
AND AVOID ANY PUBLIC REFERENCES TO LACK OF
CONSULTATION AND NEGATIVE ALLIED REACTIONS.
OBVIOUSLY, IF FRENCH INITIATIVE SHOULD PROVE
TO BE A KEY NEGOTIATING BREAKTHROUGH, THIS
WOULD GAIN CREDIT FOR GISCARD. FROM
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OUR VANTAGE POINT, THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE
IN THE CARDS, BUT HOPEFULLY IT WILL NOT
APPEAR AS A TOTAL FAILURE. WHILE THIS IS
OBVIOUSLY NOT A MAKE OR BREAK ISSUE IN
THE FRENCH ELECTIONS, IF GISCARD CAN CLAIM
CREDIT FOR PROVIDING A CATALYST FOR A SATISFACTORY

CONCLUSION IN BELGRADE, THIS WOULD SERVE OUR INTERESTS
IN FRANCE.
MYERSON

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